Characters

Speaker

Scene 1

sketch #1: black & white two-dimensional planes

SPEAKER
a macadam road & black bark trees
singed grass in soot dirt & a house
more like a cave / she's black too
not tar like but a shade lighter than
the sky that envelopes her legs while
she walks / head lights frighten her
where she is from the sun is ochre
& sunlight no different from sleep.
her most serious problem is how
to stop walking on this road the
color of pitch / this path slippin off
exploration with long
sticks leads nowhere / she is trapped
in black & white / without shadows she cannot
lean against anything / the earth has no depth
because she cannot hold it / she cannot go away
the horizon implies three-dimensions
if she were to try to bump into a tree / she
wd go thru it unmarked / no things
have taste / or weight / she is as facile
as air at 14 years old / she wonders if
anyone has penetrated the chiascuro of her life
she is a deeper grey than the shutters
of her house / her hair tangles the wind
like billie holiday's voice / her tears
fall behind her blacker than her songs
she follows these back to her house
where she howls
for anything red.

Scene 2

sketch #2: black & white two-dimensional planes

SPEAKER
inside the cave she imagines she can
cook something to eat / but her hands
dont work / the skillet burns up
her mother's smoke scars her arms
her mouth blurts some phrase she wd have
a fierce yellow / but she doesnt know
what that is / she tries to stumble on
something to stop this charcoal life

she goes from room to room like a
tractor in the grapes of wrath / but
everything she touches gets blacker &
more non-descript / that's it she says
to herself / smudges / i'm soft graphite
i'm clumsy & wreckless / i'm a hazard to definitions
she threw herself on her bed & her sobs
roused her so / she began to beat the walls
her fists matted the surface with grime /
she turned to the doors / rubbin her face
across the thresholds / she created ebony blurs /
that she cdnt even reach less she leave
a furrow of slate finger prints / she made things
black / undistinguishable / only someone else accustomed
to / overwhelming darkness / cd see her under the bed
tryin not to wipe her tears / she didnt want anything as black
as the palms of her hands to touch her /
she waz black enuf awready /
dawns held no surprises.

Scene 3

sketch #3: black & white two-dimensional planes

SPEAKER
she felt like an oven / all black & crusty
with a huge space to fill up with something
she ate newspapers / the black & white pages
thinking news of the outside world wd soothe
her hunger / but she started to eat her books
even the gothic novels / the frank yerby slaves
made her ill / but she chewed *foxes of harrow*
& swallowed *mandingo* / like her joy she had
hidden these pages in a great box under her
bed / no one understood where the newspapers
disappeared to / but she knew it didnt matter
cuz the outside world waz black & white & thin
like where she lived / she cd read in the dark
& eventually / only ate *the new york times* /
the newsprint of the *times* waznt cheap like
local papers / or gritty like the *philadelphia*
inquirer / but as she tore the pages / Help Wanted
first then / Real Estate / stuffing them in her
mouth / she never thought places people or ideas
were anything but black & white / no one printed
books in colors / plus she waznt sure what colors
were / til she discovered jesus / on the radio /
the voice / with cadence like her grandma's but deep
& husky / the voice said hello to jesus / that jesus
waz with us tonite & there waz a great light shining
in her soul / she said amen amen / like the other voices
& as jesus came closer to her heart the way the

deep voice waz sayin / she knew the sun waz yellow
& warm cuz the sun got in her throat & pushed a
Brilliant glow of shout from her / not only heaven
But the world waz bathed in the gold of his love
She ran in the sunlight of herself thru the house
Praisin god / lettin her laughter wash thru the
Darkness of night / & she stood in a arc of yellow
So bright / her mother came runnin to see what waz

Scene 4

SPEAKER
the matter/ even tho the child had layed
a daffodil glaze to the whole house/ the mother cd not
see/ jesus had released her/ to the warmth of herself
the mother waz cold/ & thought the rush of color
from her daughter's mouth/ too blazing & niggardly
for her household/ no more deep voices on the radio/
no jesus does not like noise/ & his light shines
in the church & the blessing & the lord's prayer
using trespasses not debts/ they owed no debts/ &
the daffodils crawled back into the child's mouth
but she never forgot again that even in jesus
didnt hear her sayin hello/ something made her
wanna say hello/ cuz she hadda glowin inside her
that changed the world/ now she cd touch her face
with the palms of her hands she usedta sit on/ those black
hands/ now caressed her with forsythia delicacy/
her soul wax filled with daffodils/ tulips spread
in her cheeks/ she waz growin beyond this singed & reluctant
plane/ she discovered dimensions & hope/ "there are
horizons"/ she said/ "there are different dawns/
not here/ but out there some where/ or maybe
in my hands/ these black hands".

Scene 5

sketch #4: black & white two-dimensional planes

SPEAKER
the corn waz yellow/ under the heavy sheaths of husk
the corn waz yellow/ as she waz bright under the
crust of herself/ the sunrise waz piqued with
gold/ like her voice winding thru the limbs of trees
on the thin road she no longer walked/ she sailed
the gravel & the sticks she held as a mast for
herself/ at the door/ she drew in all this color
the spinach waz ashen still & the grim boilin water
for black teas/ greeted her with cackles/ shrieks &
ignorance of her tastes/ once under her bed & starving
she let out the gust of her light/ & lay it abt her
like other girls she didnt know abt might have lined up

their dolls/ she studied the legs & arms of herself
the hair & lips of herself/ before the burst of
spirit let her hold herself/ she had withdrawn
from the hugs of her mother her father her grandmother
& those other lil black things who lived with her
the sisters & brothers who had found no colors/ who
still left huge slurs of grey all around/ she
held herself in her light/ feeling sorry for the
rest/ if she let them near her/ they might smudge
this precious secret/ this soft fire she waz/ she wd
never do that/ she waz selfish/ she wd never even tell
them there waz something more than black & white
skinny lives & black & white shutters/ black
lies & white yelps/ she wd never tell them/ but
as she thought these black & white thoughts/
she heard the little black things/ brothers & sisters
making sounds like horses surrounded by coyotes/ sounds
like rodan & someone falling from a 16th floor
thru the glass / to sidewalks / sounds like the crowd
peering at a smashed body / she ran / she ran leaving
blurts of yellow & smudges of grey thru the halls /
everything she touched as she stumbled toward the noise
waz golden & black / she had forgotten to put her spirit back /

Scene 6

SPEAKER
she ran into a wave of heat she had never felt/ a rush of
scarlet came cross her body/ threw her over the porch
to reach the ankle of one of the little black things/
red/ she saw red/ & the little black things tears were
orange as she grabbed their faces & her brightness/
wiped the fire from their brows/ they were charred now/
as thin scrawny cheap white men made down the road
laughin out the windows of their thin scrawny truck
"niggahs/ niggahs/ go home/ go home / niggahs"/ the little
black things/ pulled to her & whimpered little black
whys/ "why did those white men make red of our house/
why did those white men/ want to blacken even the white
doors of our house/ why make fire of our trees/ & our
legs/ why make fire/ why laugh at us/ say go home/
arent we home/ arent we home"/ she saw red/ she saw
senseless blazes in her arms/ carrying the little black
things into the house/ the black & white house/ the
smudges of children/ were a cacophony of colors
now they all knew/ if you can see black/ you can
see/ yellow/ that softness/ that glow that wipes tears
& holds close/ but holding close & soft/ means danger
makes you see red/ to orange/ to make fury/ to champion
the tendermost/ she drew the little black things with
her under her bed/ & wiped the scarlet

stains from their mouths with the light of herself/
even these smudges of children/ these little black
things cdnt dim the brightness of her/ she cd tell
them/ but even she didnt know why
the thin scrawny white men in a truck laughin/ had
made a fire/ to char these black limbs til they
fell abt the fields/ like dry old leaves/ she didnt
know why in a flat black & white town / thin grown men /
with faces like dead white rats / why / why wd they make fire
of these smudges of children / she grabbed the little
black things even closer to her / she saw red again /
everytime she remembered / scrawny men with faces / smiling /
faces like dead white rats.

Scene 7

sketch #5: black & white two-dimensional planes

SPEAKER
she got too big to hide under her bed/
she didnt really want to hide anymore/ the warmth
of her waz sought & cherished by the smudges of
children/ even they shared the little color they
had dug from themselves/ the glow & the ravage of red
the orange leaps they spattered cross the sky/
there waz the thin black road & the frail charcoal
of dusk here/ but morning breeze curved their lips
/ left the treasured azure hue of dream on their
cheeks/ she grew to expect colors/ & the memories
of acres of indistinguishable black mosses/ walls
of shadow creepin between/ long thin steps / her
own dark paths/ & the hungers she knew
that opaque night the thin white men in a truck spread
a sick crimson round her mouth/ the blue of dream
in her arms/ these/ violet memories/ rounded her body so/
gave depth to her gaze/ she waz too full for black
& white & thin life/ besides/ her eyes were chestnut
brown.